

## Message from the President, October 2017



*Kathy Simons (2017 WTS-LA Chapter President), Photo © John Livzey, 2017*

### A Change in the Whether...

Author Robert C. Gallagher said, “Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.” Of course, he’s right. But I would take it even one step further, aside from the coins. Even change changes. Consider this. A recent study determined that today’s college graduates, on average, will switch careers five times. That’s not five job changes, but five complete career changes. Imagine changing your career five times! Sounds daunting. And the pace of that change far outpaces career outlooks when I started in the transportation industry. So, even change changes. And whether you see that as daunting or not, smart money still prepares for change.

A new season is upon us. Leaves tumble. Temperatures drop. Winds shift. Fall is a season of change, of change and renewal. But for profound, effective change, one must first undergo a process of reflection, of self-examination. Both personally and professionally, fall is an excellent and natural time to really pause and examine who you are and where you are. Are you where you want to be professionally and personally? The answers to those questions should help you establish new goals, and from those goals a detailed and practical plan. But there is a key element of change that often gets overlooked.

Risk is defined as “a situation involving exposure to danger.” Wow. That sounds scary. And it is. But danger, too, can be defined in many ways. The problem is, most people don’t like to think about danger or what frightens them. So, they avoid identifying potential risks, particularly when it comes to their careers. But what you don’t confront can very much hurt you or at least hold you back. Teaching yourself to first identify and then mitigate risk can never be overemphasized. It is a critical skill for true advancement and fulfillment in life. It is a vital element in accepting and managing risk. But people fear risk for another specific, more prosaic reason.

What if I make a mistake? Well, what if you do? No one wants to make mistakes, but everyone does. Mistakes are actually good; they lead to growth. So, it’s not the mistakes themselves that are the problem, it’s not the perceived “danger,” or the fear of doing something wrong. The rub is how each and every one of us reacts to those mistakes. It’s our behavior after we’ve committed an error. Do we let them devastate us or do we laugh them off, accept responsibility, pick up the pieces, and move on with the

knowledge and experience we've gained? Guess which one I think is better? It sounds very hard to do. It is. But with practice and patience, it becomes much easier over time.

What is true for us individually is equally true for organizations, including, of course, WTS-LA. We are always growing and challenging ourselves to do better. Mistakes are an inherent part of that process. And we've made mistakes. But rather than squelch them, we treat them as opportunities to learn and grow. Again, that is the key.

Both personally and professionally, we must take risks, challenge ourselves, and grow. And when mistakes happen—and they will—we must accept them and find the lesson in each and every one. Famed productivity expert W. Edwards Deming said, “It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.” Well, in WTS-LA, we not only seek to survive, but thrive. So, change is necessary. Act accordingly.

**Kathy Simons**

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